



AIATSIS

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ABORIGINAL  
AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STUDIES

Exploring the future of Indigenous family  
history research  
**Presentation to the National Native Title  
Conference 2017**

Kayannie Denigan, Narelle Rivers, Erin Vink, PJ Williams  
@AIATSIS



- Please be advised that this presentation contains photographs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have died.
- Some terms and ideas discussed reflect historical perspectives and may now be considered offensive.

# Setting the Scene

- The Noble Savage: “The most wretched people on earth, but in reality they are far more happier than we Europeans.” – James Cook
- The Great Chain of Being: Ranked everything on earth, from minerals all the way to God.
- Phrenology: measured bumps on people’s heads.
- Social Darwinism: Aboriginal people could not integrate into white society – we would die out.
- Terra Nullius: Australia didn't belong to anyone.

# Queensland

- *Industrial and Reformatory Schools Act 1865*
  - Set up special schools to educate and care for neglected children – any Aboriginal child was deemed to be neglected.
- *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897*
  - The most restrictive of the protection acts, used as a model for other states in their dealings with Aboriginal people.
  - Made all Aboriginal people wards and aimed to limit the increase of the ‘half caste menace’, specifically preventing assimilation.

# New South Wales

- Legislation prior to 1909
  - *Supply of Liquors to Aborigines Prevention Act, Vagrancy Act, Police Offences Act*, were used and included establishment of the Aborigines Protection Board in 1883.
- *Aborigines Protection Act 1909*
  - Formally established the APB and applied to all Aboriginal people. Gave power for children to be removed and placed into service.
  - The first piece of legislation that dealt specifically with Aboriginal people in New South Wales

**“Residents at Ramahyuck  
Aboriginal Mission Station in  
front of Church”**

H. B Hammond, 1906 H21074, State Library of  
Victoria





**“Aboriginal children at Mapoon Mission, waiting for their meal, 1935”**

72531, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland

**“Pupils of Saint Pauls Mission  
School Moa Island 1948”**

6341-0001-0441, John Oxley Library, State  
Library of Queensland





# Qld vs NSW

## Queensland

- The type of contact children had with their family and culture varied -
- Aboriginal people were excluded from white society and need a 'exemption' from the Act to assimilate
- "was far more restrictive than any legislation operating in New South Wales or Victoria" – Henry Reynolds

## New South Wales

- Government specifically prevented children from being in contact with their family and culture
- Aboriginal people were excluded to a certain extent but also assimilated.
- "unique in their blatant and single-minded focus on absorbing the Aboriginal population" - Katherine Ellinghaus

# Who owns the past?

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are “captives of the archives.”
- Our history is the version of non-Indigenous people.
- Ownership of historical records.

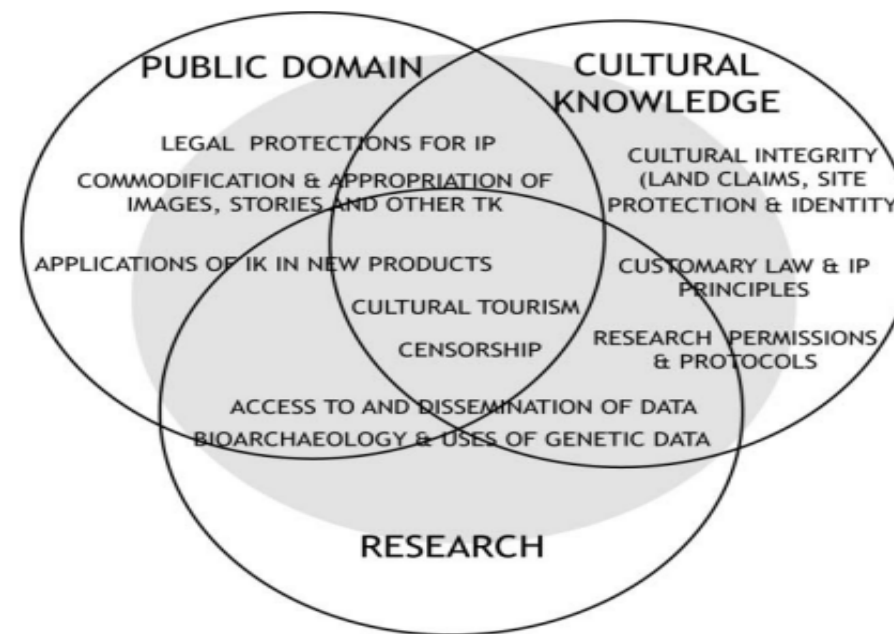


FIGURE 1 Themes related to intellectual property issues in cultural heritage.

- A diagram depicting the complex Archaeoscape surrounding heritage sites (Hollowell, Nicholas, 2009).

# Rise of the Family Historian

- Sensationalised by TV programs and societies.
- Indigenous Knowledge
- Digital age of technology.
- The ability to reconstitute what is available.



# Archivists



- Reconciliation through access.
- Indexing.
- The speed of expansion.
- Championing records that tell stories of First Nation communities.
- Education

# Why is it difficult finding and obtaining records?

- Access and control conditions
- Australian Privacy Principles (APP) and 1998 Privacy Act.
- Differences between “c”ollections within a national “C”ollection.
- Records that are not covered by the Freedom of Information Act.

# Anthropological Work

- Twentieth century work
- Norman Tindale – South Australian Museum
- Lauriston Sharp – Cornell University
- Caroline Tennant Kelly – one of the first generation of Australian-born anthropologists

# The Norman Tindale Collection

- Anthropologist employed by the South Australian Museum
- Controversial work
- Access conditions in place today



Tindale holding a child from the Monamona Mission, Queensland, 1938.

Photo: Dorothy Tindale 1938  
South Australian Museum Tindale Collection.

# The Bringing Them Home Report

- Recommendation 21 The Destruction of Records Prohibited
- Recommendation 22 Record Preservation
- Recommendation 23 Joint Records Taskforce
- Recommendation 24 Inter-State Enquiries
- Recommendation 25 Minimum Access Standards



# The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)

- Adopted by the UN General Assembly 2007;
- In 2009, the Rudd government announced its support for the Declaration, with the declaration subsequently ratified;
- Article 3 states that “Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.”

# Bringing Then Home 20 Years on:

an action plan for healing

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation 2017

- ACTION 1 – Comprehensive response for Stolen Generations;
- ACTION 2 – Healing intergenerational trauma;
- ACTION 3 – Creating an environment for change
- “...A review of access to records at all levels of government, including states and territories, and non-government agencies is needed and the implementation of the report’s recommendations is required.”

# Setting the Record Straight for the Rights of the Child

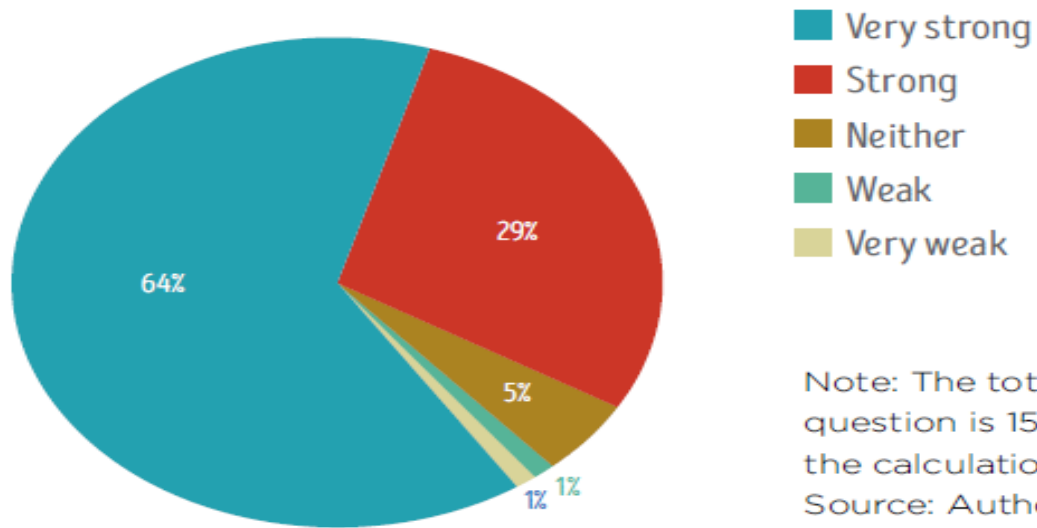
- Developing a national framework for recordkeeping;
- Designing and implementing the infrastructure to support an independent lifelong living archive for every child who experiences out-of-home care;
- Establishing a rights based charter for childhood recordkeeping which recognises the agency of children in relation to recordkeeping;
- Advocating for an independent recordkeeping and rights of the child body; and
- Developing a 10 year research, development and action agenda to identify, progress, support, evaluate and monitor transformations.

# Indigenous Data Sovereignty

- Indigenous communities need the right data in order to support their own self-determination;
- Currently, there is little to no participation by Indigenous peoples in the design of frameworks used to gather information;
- Who do we collect data for?
- Why do we collect it?
- Who owns it?

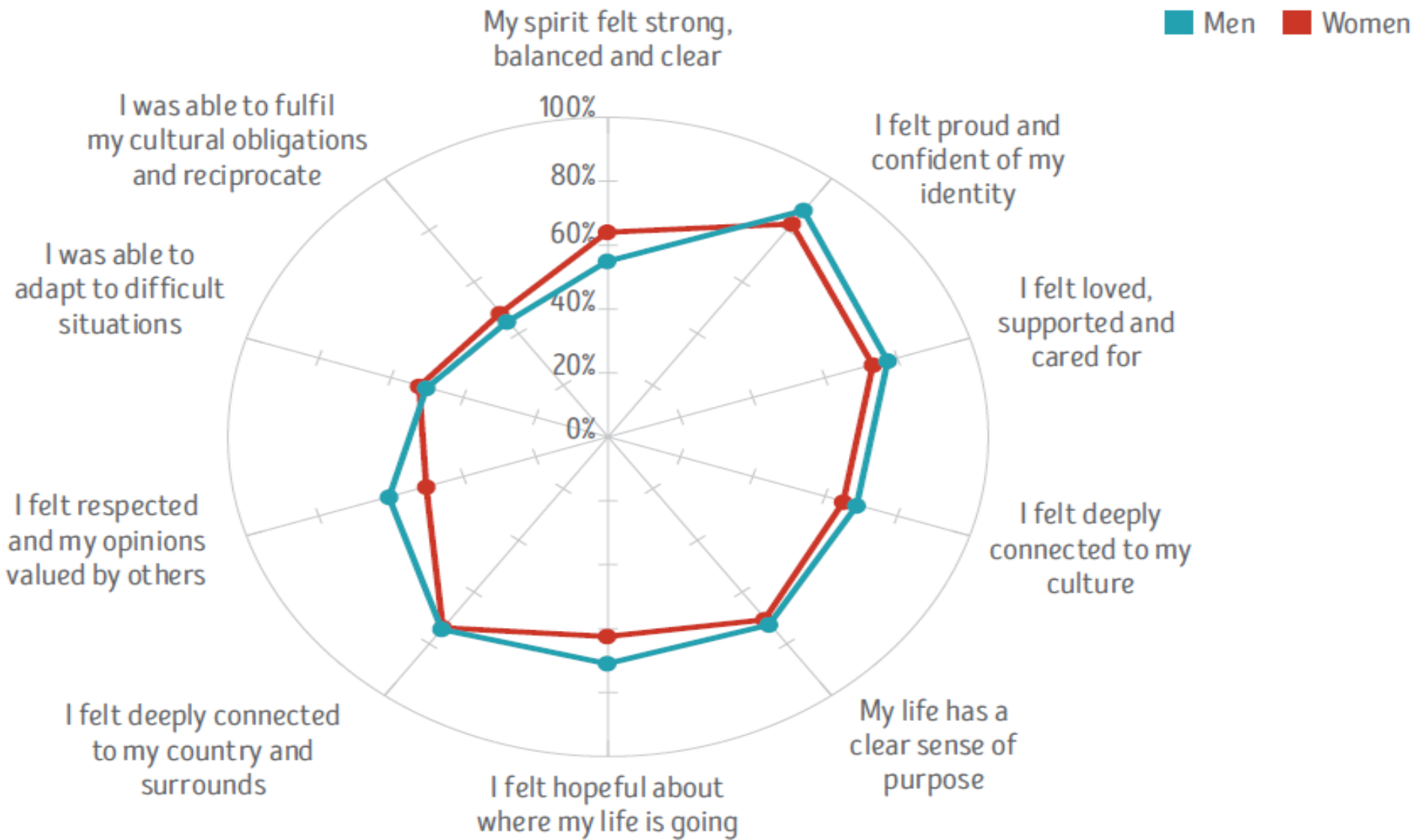
- Seminar, Emeritus Professor John Taylor, attended 24/05/17

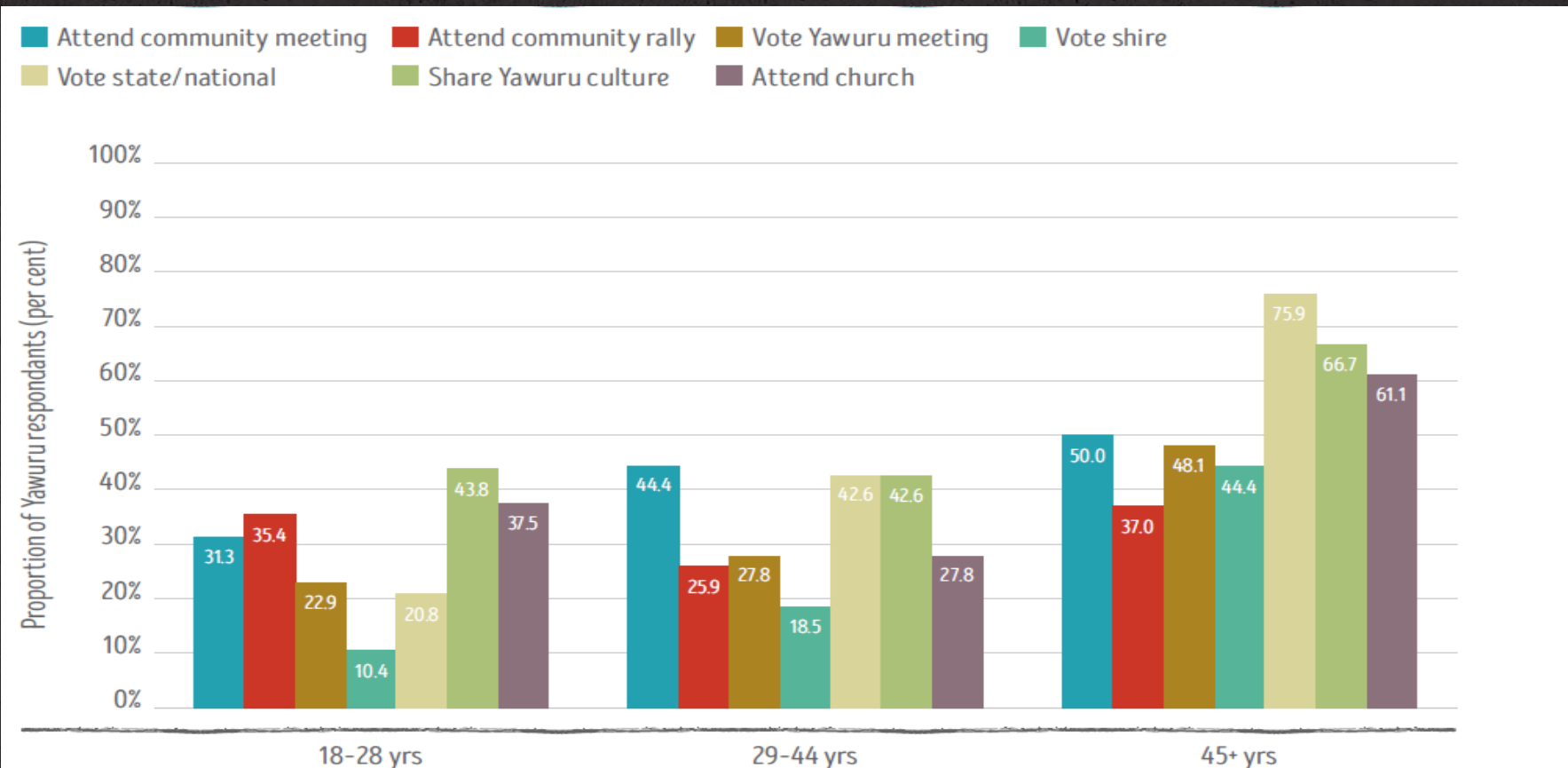
## Strength of family connection



Note: The total sample size for respondents to this question is 154 persons. Non-respondents are not included in the calculations (n=2).

Source: Authors' calculations from the 2015 Yawuru Wellbeing Survey.





Community Wellbeing from the Ground Up: A Yawuru example pg 57

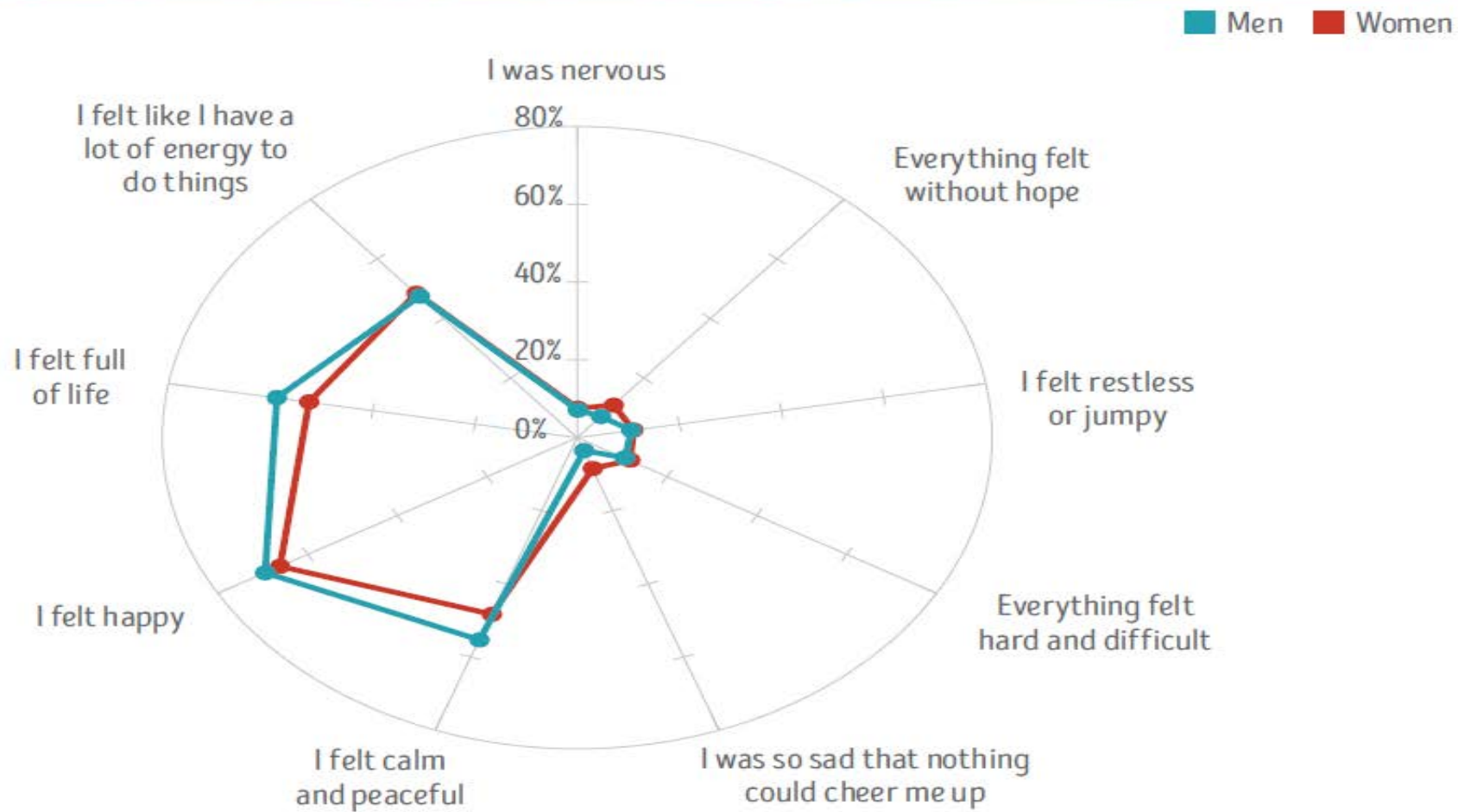
## The social and cultural dimensions of fishing and hunting for Yawuru women and men

	18 - 28 yrs		29 - 44 yrs		45 + yrs	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Learnt how to hunt and fish	100.0	93.3	100.0	91.2	100.0	97.1
Access country	77.8	70.0	85.0	82.4	75.0	88.2
Knowing about hunting and fishing	72.2	66.7	75.0	47.1	90.0	79.4
Fished and hunted at least some of the time	88.9	66.7	75.0	79.4	80.0	79.4
Receive catch and kill from family/friends	88.9	86.7	80.0	76.5	90.0	94.1
Share catch and kill with family/friends	75.0	86.7	84.2	67.6	85.0	94.1
Satisfaction with catch and kill quality	70.6	63.3	85.0	67.6	95.0	85.3

Community Wellbeing from the Ground Up: A Yawuru example pg 64



## Positive and negative feelings - men and women



Questions?